



PTSD

- Anxiety disorder caused by a traumatic event or series of such events.
- Characterized by symptoms of withdrawal to avoid troubling memories that intrude and cause distress.

Secondary Trauma Stress

- The natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other, and the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.
- Also called “compassion fatigue.”

Compassion Fatigue

- “The cost of caring.”
- Characterized by losing your sense of self to the clients you serve.
- Emotional residue of exposure to working with the suffering.
- Must contend not only with normal work stress, but with the emotional and personal feelings for the suffering.

Compassion Fatigue (cont.)

- State of tension and preoccupation with the individual or cumulative trauma of clients.
- With CF, you are absorbing the trauma through the eyes and ears of your clients.

Human Costs of Compassion Fatigue

- Job performance goes down.
- Mistakes go up.
- Morale drops.
- Personal relationships are affected.
- Home lives and personality starts to deteriorate.
- Can lead to overall decline in health.

Understanding One's Ability to Tolerate Stress

- Past victimization.
- Personal values and attitudes.
- Sense of control.
- Personality.
- Residual stress level.
- General state of health.

Organizational/External Factors That Contribute to Stress

- Work overload.
- Family conflicts.
- Threat of job loss.
- Job conflict or ambiguity.
- Interpersonal conflicts.
- External agency conflicts.

Organizational/External Factors That Contribute to Stress (cont.)

- Organizational culture.
- Insufficient resources.
- Inadequate job training.
- Supervisor's attitudes.
- Changes in organizational structure or vision.

Manifestations of Stress

- Symptoms of psychological stress.
- Symptoms of cognitive stress.
- Physical manifestations of stress.

Harmful Coping Mechanisms

- Cigarettes
- Alcohol
- Prescription drugs

Recognizing Stress in One's Working Environment

- Isolation.
- Funding pressures.
- Irregular work schedules.
- Sense of helplessness or hopelessness.
- Absence of "closure."
- Role conflicts.
- Ongoing human suffering & cruelty.
- Lack of referral agencies.
- Frustration with the justice system.
- Poor equipment.
- Lack of career opportunities.
- Inadequate rewards.
- Excessive paperwork.

Techniques to Prevent Stress from Becoming Burnout

- Warn new staff about over-identifying with the job.
- Meet regularly with staff to address work overload.
- Arrange for regular meetings to discuss the impact of work on personal lives.
- Help staff set limits.
- Mitigate stress by focusing on the importance of the work!

Techniques to Prevent Stress from Becoming Burnout (cont.)

- Encourage vacation time.
- Promote regular exercise within and external to the work environment.
- Provide training opportunities.

Relaxation Exercises

- Deep breathing.
- Body scan.
- Progressive muscle relaxation.
- Meditation.
- Guided imagery.
- Yoga.

Tips to Relieve Stress

- Time management
- Attitude
- Relaxation, meditation and guided imagery
- Exercise
- Fun and laughter

Addressing Stress Through Mutual Support

- Informal meetings
- Chat/discussion groups on the Internet
- Exercise as a *scheduled* group activity
- Scheduled retreats

Managing Conflict

- Define the problem(s) in terms of needs, not competing solutions.
- Generate possible solutions.
- Evaluate and test various solutions.
- Decide on a mutually acceptable solution.
- Implement the solution.
- Evaluate the solution.